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Department
of Human
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Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, August 25, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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August 25, 2008

Child injured in shooting; might stem from feud

Trace Christenson
The Enquirer

Battle Creek police said they believe a dispute between gang members is behind a shooting early Sunday that injured a 4-year-old girl.

The child, whose name was not released Sunday by police, was shot in the arm when a shot missed the intended target and hit her house, police said.

The girl was sleeping in a second-story bedroom about 12:45 a.m. when several shots were fired into a house in the 100 block of Hubbard Street near the intersection with Parkway Drive. One of the shots missed the house on Hubbard and struck the home on Parkway Drive where the girl lived.

The girl's father told police he was watching television and his two daughters were upstairs sleeping when one of them came downstairs crying and saying she was hurt.

The girl has been shot in the right armpit, police reported. She was taken to Battle Creek Health System and then to Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo. Her injury was not life-threatening.

Police said neighbors reported hearing four or five shots.

The incident could have been retaliation for a reported robbery Wednesday at another house on Hubbard Street. Shots were fired into that house on Friday, police reported.

Officers from the Gang Suppression Unit and the detective bureau said the Sunday morning shooting could have been a continuation of that feud.

A reward of up to \$5,000 is offered by the Silent Observer program for information about the shooting of the young girl.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Battle Creek Police Department at 966-3322 or Silent Observer at 964-3888. Callers to Silent Observer can remain anonymous.

Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

Two charged in child's death

KALKASKA -- Authorities charged two more people in the death of a Kalkaska toddler, including the child's mother.

Cody Cross, 3, died Aug. 3 of blunt-force trauma to the head at a Grand Rapids Hospital. Sheldon McDonald, the boyfriend of Cody's mother, Pamela Buning, was arrested and charged with an open count of murder and first-degree child abuse.

Authorities subsequently charged Buning, 24, with first-degree child abuse, conspiracy to obstruct justice and accessory after the fact to a felony. Kalkaska County Prosecutor Brian Donnelly also charged Heather Batchelor, 29, with conspiracy to obstruct justice and accessory after the fact to a felony.

Monday, August 25, 2008

Man accused of rape in 1994 arraigned on other sex crimes

Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News

STERLING HEIGHTS --The man whom Sterling Heights police believe is responsible for a 1994 rape was arraigned this morning on other sex crimes.

Craig Hamilton Gonser, 40, waived the formal reading of his charges in 41-A District Court. However, authorities said he's charged with distribution of sexually explicit material to a minor, aggravated indecent exposure and indecent exposure stemming from a 2004 Sterling Heights incident with a minor relative.

Sterling Heights District Judge Kimberley Wiegand entered a not guilty plea on Gonser's behalf and set bond at \$500,000 cash surety. Gonser didn't make any statements during the video arraignment; he was at the Sterling Heights jail and could be viewed on a television in the courtroom.

Gonser's preliminary exam will be held Sept. 8 before District Chief Judge Stephen Sierawski.

Macomb Assistant Prosecutor Therese Tobin initially requested a \$1 million bond for Gonser because "Mr. Gonser is a threat to the community."

Gonser has multiple previous convictions that include: two counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct; assault and battery; indecent conduct; disorderly conduct; and domestic violence, Tobin said.

DNA also linked Gonser to the 1994 rape of a Clinton Township woman, authorities said, however, he won't face charges on that crime because the statute of limitations has expired.

"None of his crimes are victimless crimes," Tobin said.

Gonser's retained defense attorney, Jim Simasko, declined to comment on the case until he's read the police report.

You can reach Christina Stolarz at (586) 468-0343 or cstolarz@detnews.com.



August 24, 2008

CRCF awards grant for child abuse prevention program

GRAND LEDGE — The Capital Region Community Foundation has awarded a grant to the Child Abuse Prevention Council for one of its key prevention programs. The foundation awarded \$1,333 for the Bubbylonian Encounter Program For Kids from the Greater Lansing Fund.

Bubbylonian Encounter is a 30-minute, live theatrical performance that uses humor, drama, and audience participation to cover the range of positive and negative touching and the steps to take if inappropriate touch should happen, or be happening, to elementary school age children. It has continually proven to successfully teach children valuable skills to protect themselves in the event of inappropriate touch.

Last year, Bubbylonian was presented to over 800 children, 120 school personnel, and over 60 county staff, parents and caregivers in the community.

— From the Child Abuse Prevention Council

Former Holland Police Officer Ken DeKleine ordered to spend life in prison for killing wife

Posted by [llupo](#) August 25, 2008 11:49AM



Chronicle News ServiceDefense attorney Floyd Farmer, left, and Ken DeKleine appear in court in July before the jury began its 75-minute deliberation.

GRAND HAVEN -- Former Holland Police Officer Ken DeKleine was ordered this morning to spend the rest of his life in prison without parole for killing his wife.

A 13-year Holland police officer, DeKleine, 45, was convicted in July of killing Lori DeKleine after a jury deliberated only 75 minutes.

DeKleine said nothing in court, but winked at family members seated in the courtroom.

Ottawa County Circuit Judge Calvin Bosman questioned why DeKleine did not get help when he was being overcome with the rage that led to the murder.

"With your Christian education, your training as a police officer, your good record as a police officer, why during the course of a year something didn't register in your mind there would be some other course of action to take remains a total mystery," Bosman said.

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Comments

Footer

Former Holland Police Officer Ken DeKleine ordered to spend life in prison for killing wife

Posted by [pwest](#) August 25, 2008 11:27AM



Press Photos/Mark Copier Former Holland Police Officer Ken DeKleine appears in Ottawa County Circuit Court for sentencing in the killing of his wife, Lori.

GRAND HAVEN -- Former Holland Police Officer Ken DeKleine was ordered this morning to spend the rest of his life in prison without parole for killing his wife.

A 13-year Holland police officer, DeKleine, 45, was convicted in July of killing Lori DeKleine after a jury deliberated only 75 minutes.

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Ken DeKleine, left, in Ottawa County Circuit Court listens to statements made by family members of Lori DeKleine. The former Holland police officer was sentenced to life in prison without parole for her murder.

His video-taped confessions shows he entered the garage of his former Calvin Avenue home in the middle of the night Jan. 10, waited in attic for several hours, then pushed his way into the house after Lori DeKleine opened the door in the morning.

He admitted to strangling her with a climbing strap, then dragging her body into the basement and trying to stage a suicide. In the confession, he admitted to botching the scheme when he could not lift her body and simply leaving the unattached strap dangling from a rafter.

Court testimony showed DeKleine was in a bitter divorce and custody battle with Lori DeKleine, 43, and was obsessed with her relationship with her therapist. The couple have two teen children, Breanne and Christopher.



Family members of Lori DeKleine, including her mother, Jena Meulman, third from left, and her father, Paul Meulman, second from right, embrace outside Ottawa County District Court after Ken DeKleine was sentenced Monday.

The parents of Lori DeKleine and her sister, Patti Ticknor, made emotional statements before Bosman sentenced DeKleine. They said they cannot fathom why he took her life.

"Thoughts of this event plague my mind frequently. I have spent many sleepless nights trying to understand Ken's selfish act," said Lori DeKleine's father, Paul Meulman.

In court, Ticknor said she once respected and cared for Ken DeKleine, and admired him as a father, "until he thought it best to play God and kill Lori."

DeKleine portrayed his estranged wife as someone mentally unstable who was damaging their children psychologically, but Ottawa County Prosecutor Ron Frantz said the evidence did not show any problems. In fact, she was a good mother and was respected at her church job, he said.

In letters from jail, DeKleine told others he was at peace with his wife's killing and said he was "sleeping better now than I have in two years."

He wrote that the killing seemed like the best option to him.

"I feel so free. I am not worried sick by what (Lori DeKleine) is doing to the kids anymore by her lies, blackmail and extortion."

DeKleine's fellow police officers said they never imagined he would resort to violence, even though many knew about his marital strife. Lori DeKleine had a personal protection order against her husband.

Lori DeKleine's family believes the Holland police department should have done more to recognize that one of their own officers was losing control. They believe DeKleine was protected by the "blue wall," although Holland Police Chief John Kruithoff has always said DeKleine showed no outward signs of trouble.

Her sister's death has motivated Ticknor to become involved with the Michigan Officer-involved Domestic Violence group and try to spread the word about how women can get help in abusive homes.

"Lori would be proud of us for having someone else learn from her situation," Ticknor said. "She would want someone's life to be saved."

E-mail John Tunison: jtunison@grpress.com

Categories: [Courts & Crime](#), [Top story](#)

Away from the city

Posted by [Susan Harrison Wolffis | The Muskegon Chronicle](#) August 23, 2008 22:51PM

Categories: [Top Photos](#)



Chronicle/Ken

StevensMore than 200 people registered for the Aug. 15 Second Harvest Gleaners Good Bank truck at Fifth Reformed Church in Dalton Township. It was the only Gleaners truck targeting the rural poor. [Enlarge photo](#)

Rural poor face unique challenges

Theresa Fowler was up and dressed for work early Aug. 15, the day the mobile food pantry from Second Harvest Gleaners of West Michigan rumbled into the parking lot of Fifth Reformed Church on M-120 to pass out free food.

Fowler, who had a 10-hour work day ahead of her at the Wesco gas station on Maple Island Road outside Fremont, was in the Gleaners' line by 7 a.m.

The 46-year-old works 40 hours a week, extra if she can, and always on holidays when the pay is higher. Yet, to make ends meet, she has to rely on charity once a month to help put food on the table.

"I'm standing in line because I need help," Fowler said.

She had taken special care to get dressed that morning. Her shirt was pressed; her blue jeans rolled to capri-length; her hair already moussed and spiked into place.

"Can't be late for work," she said.

Her presence, the fact she was in a work uniform, waiting for food, preached a sermon all its own about the plight of Muskegon County's working poor -- people who have jobs but are struggling financially.

"Everyone here's got a story," Fowler said.

She looked up and down the line growing in number, everyone clutching a basket or empty box to fill with food. Some had been in line since before 5 a.m. Fowler was No. 61 in a line that grew to 218 by 10 a.m.

Gleaners trucks, filled with free food, make as many as 10 stops each month in Muskegon County -- but the one on Aug. 15 was unique. Most of the August sites were in the county's urban core. The one at Fifth Reformed Church, located at 2330 Holton not far from the U.S. 31 interchange, was "the farthest out" geographically. It drew residents from Dalton and Cedar Creek Townships, Twin Lake, Holton and homes considered on the "outskirts" of Muskegon County.

"It's tough," Fowler said. "Look around, nobody's job is safe anymore. People are struggling in the city, and out here, too."

Suddenly overcome with emotion, standing in the midst of so much apparent need, Fowler leaned on the shoulder of her next-door neighbor, Diane Blondeel, with whom she had come to the food truck -- and, for a few minutes, she cried her heart out. Her tears prompted a stranger to give up her place in line ahead of Fowler in order to comfort her.

"It's OK. You're a good person," the stranger said, patting Fowler on the shoulder.

Fowler worked to regain her composure, find her voice again.

"That's hard to say; hard to admit. I've always worked, always taken care of myself and my family," she said. "Saying it out loud: I need help. That's hard."



Chronicle/Ken

Stevens Roger Gagnon, 66, of Holton, far left, Theresa Fowler, 46, of Muskegon Township and neighbor Diane Blondeel, 57, receive food on Aug. 15 at the Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank truck at Fifth Reformed Church in Dalton Township. Volunteer Jerry Feutz, far right, assists in handing out food. Pictured next to Blondeel is volunteer William McCarthy, 18, of Fruitland Township who was helping carry her items. [Enlarge photo](#)

Fowler is caught, squeezed, forced by circumstances into a growing population of the "near" or "working poor." At least one-fifth of Muskegon County residents find themselves in a similar situations, unable to stretch paychecks already strained to the breaking point in precarious economic times.

Fowler, who has two adult children and a grandchild living with her, brings home about \$250 a week. Her job includes health, dental and vision insurance "which keeps me going. I don't know what I'd do without that," she said.

"But I'm caught in the middle," Fowler said. "I work, so I don't qualify for (public assistance) from the state, but I don't make enough to get what I need, either."

Like a reliable vehicle, for instance, to get back and forth from work.

Fowler lives in a subdivision in Cedar Creek Estates on River Road in northeastern Muskegon Township on the border of Cedar Creek Township -- "where it's not quite city, but it's not country, either," she said. She doesn't have access to public transportation where she lives. No Muskegon Area Transit System buses go anywhere near her house. She has to drive wherever she goes -- to the grocery store, the drug store, the doctor, to work, even to the Gleaners truck delivery -- which quickly drains her pocketbook in an era of \$4 a gallon gas prices.

She drives 30 miles round-trip to her job in an aging, unreliable Jeep she cannot afford to replace, even though the gas gauge is broken, and the engine is suspect. She cannot

shift the car into reverse, so she has to carefully plot out her day's travels, or else waste time and gas.

At the same time, she cannot afford to move from her duplex in Creekwood Estates because her rent is determined on a sliding pay scale, "otherwise I don't know what I'd do," she said.

Divorced after 20 years of marriage, Fowler worked three jobs -- a 14-hour day was commonplace -- when her children were younger, just to support them.

"I've always stood on my own two feet," she said. "It's my pride that's hurt ... to have to ask for help now. I've never had to rely on anyone. I always said no matter what it took, even if it meant living in a tin can, I was going to support me and my kids. That's my job. I'm the mom."

Jane Johnson, director of Muskegon County's Department of Human Services, who has worked in the social service sector for more than 30 years, hears stories similar to Fowler's every day. They are the stories behind the statistics of a "nation in crisis," Johnson said. The majority of DHS clients receiving food, day care or emergency utilities assistance are employed.

"We're seeing people asking for help who've never been here before," Johnson said.

Fowler makes too much money to qualify for government assistance, but she cuts corners wherever she can, shopping yard sales. And once a month when the Gleaners' truck is scheduled to stop at Fifth Reformed Church, not far from where she lives, she stands in line for three hours -- or more -- with Blondeel, who is on disability, to receive whatever surplus food they have.

On Aug. 15, she went home with a laundry basket filled with bread and fresh cabbage, surplus sweet corn and tubs of sour cream, lettuce and a carton of soy milk. It is the only Gleaners' stop Fowler frequents. The others are simply too far away to seek out.

Living outside of Muskegon's urban center presents what Johnson called "complicators of distance," challenges that go beyond the skyrocketing cost of propane gas or fewer food pantries in the country.

Think of all the kids who take school buses home -- because there is no other transportation in the family -- and so they can't take part in after school activities. Think of the kids whose parents are having a tough time paying the electric bill, let alone finding the money for field trips, pay-for-play sports or driver education classes.



Chronicle/Ken

StevensSome people in the Gleaners line expressed frustration and shame. Others offered a pat on the back. "It's OK," a stranger said to a woman in line. "You're a good person." [Enlarge photo](#)

"(The rural poor) get 'walled out' of certain activities and experiences because of where they live," Johnson said.

There are "challenges" to living on meager incomes in the country that aren't always obvious to those who live in town.

Consider the parent who works until 5:30 p.m. in an office in Muskegon -- but whose day-care provider in Whitehall, where the family lives, closes at 6 p.m. Imagine the struggles of the family in Holton, Ravenna or Montague who needs medical care or who qualifies for the food assistance program at Department of Human Services -- but doesn't have transportation to get to the DHS offices or the two low-income medical centers, all in Muskegon Heights.

"The economic reality is that we have to go to where the people are because they can't afford to get to us," Johnson said.

To that end, the Department of Human Services is establishing Family Resource Centers -- staffed by DHS caseworkers -- in every school district. In the 2008-2009, Family Resource Centers will be in Holton, Ravenna, Montague and Whitehall.

"There's a difference between the rural poor and the city poor. Rural poor is far more isolating," said Stuart Jones, program director for Head Start, a federally funded preschool program operated by Muskegon Area Intermediate School District.

For more than 40 years, Head Start has worked to equalize educational opportunities and preparedness for preschoolers, no matter where they live or how much money their parents make.

"If you live in Holton, or anyplace in the county's rural areas, everything is a 40- to 45-mile round trip, that is, if there's a car, and you have gas," Jones said. "Transportation is a real barrier."

Transportation is also an immense challenge for programs like Head Start, which currently buses children to school, no matter where they live. This year, Jones said, the price for diesel fuel for the buses went up \$31,000 -- but the dollars allotted to pay for it did not.

"We're committed to getting the kids there," Jones said; however, some Head Start programs across the country are cutting out transportation.

"One of the biggest problems of living in the country and being poor is isolation," Jones said. "Isolation by economics."

Hackley Community Care Center -- a medical program for the uninsured and those with low incomes -- is in Muskegon Heights.

"The obvious problem is a major one: transportation," said Linda Juarez, director of the center.

The program regularly sends a mobile dental unit to the schools for children whose families cannot send them to the dentist, but there isn't enough business to set up medical clinics or even pharmacies in the outlying areas, she said.

"It's not that (medical) providers haven't wanted to do something like that, but the volume cannot support it," Juarez said.

It is one of those conundrums of life: People choose to live in rural communities, or at least out of the city, because they're not as populated. But because they aren't as populated, there are fewer grocery stores, doctors' offices, gas stations and access to social services.

There are reasons people live on the outskirts, said Tim Burgess, executive director of the Neighborhood Investment Corp. in Muskegon.

"There often is a sense of folks doing for themselves," he said. "You can't go into a gas station in a small town without seeing a donation jar to help someone whose house burned down or whose kid is sick."

Fowler, who has a tough time making ends meet on her own, was busy finding things to donate to a yard sale to help a friend pay his hospital bills. She and Blondeel decided to combine the vegetables from the Gleaners' truck to make soup later that night -- and freeze the leftovers.

"You don't find neighbors like this in the city," she said. "It's tough out there, and it's getting worse every day. You can see it. I can see it at work, in the (Gleaners) lines, just around. You hear people's stories, and you know, everybody's struggling."

Lions Club members show they care with KidCare

Posted by [lfirant](#) August 24, 2008 09:00AM

When 14 foster children head back to school in September, they'll have cool backpacks and all kinds of supplies to make that first day special.

Twelve other foster kids will receive tote bags filled with personal hygiene and other products, including blankets, flashlights, combs, shampoo, dental necessities and wash cloths.

"Sometimes, all these kids have (when they arrive in foster care) is the clothes on their backs," said Lisa Lange, president of the [Ann Arbor \(Host\) Lions Club](#).

The program, called KidCare, is new this year said Alison Claerhout, a club member.



LEISA THOMPSON, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS
Ann Arbor (Host) Lions Club members, from left, Dan Reynolds, Colin Ross and John Krienke, stock tote bags with items for foster children on Aug. 13 for Project KidCare.

The idea for a new program came from Roberta Sexton, the Lions district governor, who challenged all the clubs in her district to develop a program for children.

"Our motto is 'We Serve,'" Sexton said, and when the Ann Arbor Club approached her with the idea to help foster children in the area, "I told them to go for it."

Glue sticks, paper, notebooks, pencils, calculators, rulers, pens, binders and stickers were included in the backpacks.

Shopping for all the supplies took about two weeks. The majority of the purchases were made by Luanne Bullington, who is legally blind, Lange said.

Funding for the project came from the Lions annual May White Cane Street Drive as well as donations from Family and Cosmetic Dentistry in Dexter and Kmart in Ann Arbor, said John Krienke, treasurer for the club and a member since 1978.

"It's easy to write a check, but to do something like this, it's special," Krienke said.

The Ann Arbor (Host) Lions club holds several fundraisers a year including White Cane Day, a June golf outing and a fruit-and-nut sale at Christmas, he said, which pay for programs like KidCare.

Ann Arbor (Host) Lions Club

Meets: first and third Tuesdays, at noon, Weber's.

Members: 45, ages 18 and older, open to all.

Dues: \$90 per year.

Web site:
www.annarborlions.org

After the items were assembled in the backpacks and totes by members at the Washtenaw County Library for the Blind, they were delivered to the Department of Human Services, Protective Services for Children Division on Aug. 13.

According to information provided by the Lions Club, there are more than 250 foster-care cases in the county and members hope to raise awareness of the need for more foster parents.

The club plans to continue the KidCare program and assemble and deliver totes once each season.

Special writer Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@sbcglobal.net or at 734-433-1052.

For more than 79 years, the Ann Arbor (Host) Lions Club has been serving the needs of the blind and visually impaired. It supports organizations that include the Michigan Eye-Bank, Leader Dogs for the Blind, Washtenaw County Library for the Blind, and Radio Talking Books.

Serving as "Knights of the Blind," the Lions Club is the founder of the Michigan Eye-Bank.

Categories: [Breaking News](#)

Comments

Footer

Traverse City Record Eagle

Published: August 25, 2008 09:56 am

Editorial: Cheers & Jeers

Cheers

To Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan, which is conducting its 19th annual Brown Bag Campaign, a drive to collect money for children in foster care. Donors put money in bags inserted in the Record-Eagle, stamp and mail them.

For more information about Child and Family Services and the campaign, call 946-8975 or visit www.cfsnwmi.org.



Monday, August 25, 2008

Michigan graduation rates: 25 percent don't finish in four years

Jennifer Mrozowski / The Detroit News

A fourth of Michigan's high school students are not graduating in four years, according to graduation rates released by the state today.

The number reflects a drop of 10 percentage points to about 75.5 percent graduating under a new formula that tracked individual students from when they entered in ninth grade in 2003 until 2007. It's said to be a more accurate picture of how many of Michigan's students earn a diploma in four years.

The formula accounts for students who transfer in and out of the district, who leave school permanently, who leave school during one school year and return in another, and for students who are retained in a grade but stay in school and graduate later than their original classmates, according to the state. Previously, the state used an estimated graduation rate based on retention.

The state's graduation rate fell from 85.8 percent to 75.5 percent. Detroit's new graduation rate is 58.4 percent, a drop from 66.8 percent in 2005-06.

You can reach Jennifer Mrozowski at (313) 222-2269 or jmrozowski@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080825/SCHOOLS/808250400>

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August 24, 2008

Rescue mission gives backpacks to 2,700 children

Kathryn Prater
kprater@lsj.com

Lansing 8-year-old Robert Pearl clutched a brand-new Spiderman backpack to his chest Saturday, grinning from ear to ear.

"Spiderman's my favorite superhero because he slings webs and defeats bad guys," he said, after receiving the Lansing City Rescue Mission's 10,000th free backpack as part of its eighth annual backpack giveaway.

The mission put together more than 2,700 backpacks this year filled with school supplies to hand out to low-income families with school-age children.

A line of eager children and parents snaked through the halls of Lansing's Gardner Middle School and spilled onto the sidewalk Saturday.

"There's a lot of low-income families in our community that are not able to buy the school supplies they need," said Roger Motter, director of operations for the mission's downtown facility.

"We are trying to help out ... so kids don't look down on them because they don't have stuff, and so the kids themselves don't feel embarrassed because they don't have the proper supplies they need for school."

That rings true for Robert's mother, Shannon Younger, who has two other school-age sons.

"Sometimes I can't afford it with all the other bills, and they enjoy being able to get different backpacks," said Younger, 36, who is a butcher at the 1910 Meat Market in Lansing.

This is the third year the family has received backpacks from the mission.

The backpacks were filled with school supplies including crayons, notebooks, folders, rulers, scissors, pencils and erasers.

Contents of the backpacks were tailored for different age levels, ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade.

Mason resident Yolanda Scarborough stopped by the giveaway to pick up backpacks for her six children, ages six to 15.

"With having six of them, I would probably spend a good \$250 to get supplies and backpacks for all of them," she said as she waited in line with her 13-year-old son, Andrew.

Local churches and individuals donated money and supplies for the giveaway.

The mission received an estimated \$4,000 for the backpacks, said Cheryl Motter, the mission's office manager.

Last year's 2,700 backpacks helped approximately 770 families, Cheryl Motter said.

The average family income last year was \$920 per month, said Jim Ellsworth, the mission's volunteer



August 23, 2008

Backpacks for low-income available today

Midday update

Kathryn Prater
Lansing State Journal

Hundreds of people are picking up free backpacks filled with school supplies today at an event organized by the Lansing City Rescue Mission.

The mission is giving away 2,700 backpacks to low-income parents and guardians of school children until 4 p.m. today at Gardner Middle School, 333 Dahlia Drive in Lansing. The giveaway may end sooner if the mission runs out of backpacks.

Local churches and individual people donated money and items needed for the project.

The backpacks are sorted by age group and filled with school supplies such as crayons, notebooks, rulers, scissors, erasers and pencils.

To be eligible, people must show proof of an income at or below poverty level and proof that they are parents or guardians of the children who are receiving backpacks.

coordinator. Students belonged to 19 school districts.
